

Annual Report of Major Outputs and Outcomes, July 2011–June 2012
Florida Department of Health, Fundamental State-Based Occupational Health and Safety
Surveillance Program

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Capacity Building

The Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) was able to move the occupational epidemiologist into a career service state FTE; the position had originally been hired through a staffing contract. This change represents a commitment to capacity by the Florida Department of Health (DOH). In addition, the OHSP was able to increase part-time resources for special projects (epidemiology of heat illness) and for data input for occupationally related pesticide poisonings. In addition, as part of capacity building the program epidemiologist attended two training classes taught by the University of South Florida Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Training Institute. Attending these courses increased the programs understanding of OSHA and industrial hygiene and will enhance our future efforts to collaborate with OSHA and to build partnerships with industrial hygienists. The epidemiologist also attended a GIS/Census training class to learn how to incorporate Census and American Fact Finder data into our program.

The OHSP was accepted as a host program for a Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University summer MPH rotation student (the actual rotation will take place in Year 3, July 2012).

Partnership Building

The Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) received permission from senior management at the DOH to form an occupational health and safety coalition. This coalition will gather stakeholders interested in occupational health across disciplines and from all over the state of Florida. Initial informational letters were developed and sent to individuals and organizations identified as having a role in occupational safety and health. The first meeting is scheduled for September 2012. In preparation for recruiting coalition members, existing partners were notified of the coalition and several partnerships were formed over the past year.

New partnerships included the following:

- University North Florida (UNF): The OHSP contracted with a researcher at UNF to produce outputs (reports and fact sheets) on the cost of occupational injury and illnesses.
- University of Miami (UM): The OHSP has expanded collaboration with UM by forming a new partnership with a group of researchers funded by a grant that focuses on young workers. The OHSP was able to provide surveillance data on young workers and is also assisting with planning a meeting that gathers experts/interested parties on youth worker issues.
- Sunshine ERC: The OHSP speaks with the ERC regularly and has received helpful feedback on program activities, partnerships, and upcoming meetings.
- Florida International University, Center for Labor Research & Studies: The OHSP is in the process of planning a focus group project that will concentrate on occupational health issues in construction and warehouse workers, primarily Hispanic workers in south Florida.
- The American Industrial Hygiene Association, Florida Chapter: After initial teleconferences, the OHSP has been invited to present at an upcoming conference.

- Safety Councils: Florida has several safety councils across the state (organizations that focus on providing safety resources and training to workers and drivers). The OHSP has reached out to three of them thus far and plans to have representatives join the coalition.
- Florida Department of Transportation (DOT): The OHSP met with the DOT to introduce the program and to discuss whether their department houses potential sources of occupational surveillance data.
- OSHA —three regional offices and area office: Began discussion with OSHA offices on how we can work together on future projects.

Reports and Other Outputs

Reports

- The Occupational Health Indicators 2000–2007 report was cleared and “branded” (a color scheme and photos added) by an in-house graphic artist.
- The Work-related Fatalities 2007 report was also cleared and is currently in the cue at the graphic artist. This report is expected to be released in August 2012.
- Report titled “Assessing the relationship of ambient temperature and heat-related illness in Florida: implications for setting heat advisories and warnings” was passed through DOH clearance. This is a pilot study of Orlando and the surrounding area. Expected release August 2012.
- Two reports and two fact sheets on the costs of occupational injuries and illnesses and comorbid chronic diseases in Florida using emergency department and hospital discharge data.

Other Outputs

- Completed and submitted 18 of the 20 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist (CSTE) occupational health indicators for 2009.
- Published an article in EpiUpdate (a monthly newsletter published by DOH and distributed to Florida public health professionals) entitled “Occupational Health and Surveillance: Select Results from State Level Occupational Indicators”.
- Occupational Health Surveillance Program website up and running.
<http://www.myfloridaeh.com/medicine/occupationalhealth/>
- Occupational health indicators went live on the Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) portal in Sept 2011. www.floridatracking.com

Surveillance

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

The results of the two questions the OHSP added to the Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey in 2011 were received. The questions were from the MMWR *Proportion of Workers Who Were Work-Injured and Payment by Workers' Compensation Systems --- 10 States, 2007*. The questions ask whether a worker was injured on the job and who paid for the injury treatment. In 2012, the same two questions mentioned above were asked again as well as a follow-up question “If workers compensation did not pay for the injury treatment why not?”. Questions about industry and occupation were also added to the survey. The OHSP has met with the BRFSS coordinator to discuss adoption of the NIOSH funded industry and occupation module in 2013.

The OHSP added questions in conjunction with the demographic information already collected on the BRFSS will provide insight into what characteristics are shared by Florida’s at-risk workers, will allow

some comparisons to proportions/trends being seen in Workers Compensation data, and will aid in creating targeted interventions.

Poison Control Center

The OHSP partnered with the Florida Chemical Disease Surveillance Program to conduct real-time surveillance of occupationally related carbon monoxide poisonings to determine if the types of cases regularly receive are good candidates for referral to OSHA.

Outcomes

In August of 2011 the Florida Department of Health was able to hire an environmental preparedness epidemiologist. The OHSP has been able to collaborate with this epidemiologist on illness outbreaks that involve chemical or radiologic exposures and which may be occupationally related.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Rash in retail workers: The OHSP and environmental epidemiologist consulted with the NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) program to create a survey that the county health department used in their investigation. Recommendations were also provided to the county, these were used to advise the employer.
- Chemical incident in a citrus plant: Syndromic surveillance systems were used to detect that several workers from a citrus processing plant had presented at the emergency department after exposure to an unknown chemical product. Consultations and questionnaires were provided to the county for follow-up with the workers. Other agencies responded and exposures were noted to be related to a chemical disinfectant (employer discontinued use of the product).

Travel/Workgroups

The OHSP was able to obtain permission to travel to the SouthON inaugural meeting and the winter CSTE Occupational Subcommittee meeting which were both held in Orlando, FL in December 2011, as well as the CSTE annual conference in Omaha, NE. A program representative also attended the workers compensation workshop in Washington DC.

Presentations

- Chalmers, J. *Florida's Occupational Health Indicators, 2000–2007*. Presented at the Florida Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health monthly statewide webinar meeting. Tallahassee, FL. September 2011.
- Watkins, S. *Welcome to Florida, Overview of Florida Occupational Health Program*. Presented at the NIOSH Occupational Health Surveillances Partner Meeting. Orlando, FL. December 2011.
- Chalmers, J. *Using CFI Data*. Presented via webinar to SouthON. February 2012.
- Chalmers, J. *Work-Related Fatalities in Florida*. Presented at the CSTE Annual Conference. Omaha, NE. June 2012.
- Watkins, S. *Review Of Occupational Indicators In Florida Over Time (2000–2007) In Order To Drive Next Steps In Data Analysis*. Presented at the CSTE Annual Conference. Omaha, NE. June 2012.